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(71) Applicant: Ausimont S.p.A.
20121 Milano (IT)

(72) Inventors:

- Arcella, Vincenzo
20014 Nerviano, Milano (IT)
- Abusleme, Julio A.
21034 Saronno, Varese (IT)

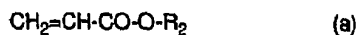
(74) Representative:

Sama, Daniele, Dr. et al
Sama Patents
Via Morgagni, 2
20129 Milano (IT)

(54) **Crosslinked compositions of thermoplastic fluoropolymers**

(57) Crosslinked polymer compositions obtained by
subjecting, to ionizing radiations compositions compris-
ing:

I) thermoprocessable copolymers of ethylene with
tetrafluoroethylene (TFE) and/or chlorotrifluoroeth-
ylene (CTFE) modified with acrylic monomers of
formula:



R₂ is a hydrogenated radical from 1 to 20 carbon
atoms, C₁-C₂₀, alkyl, linear and/or branched radi-
cal, or cycloalkyl, or R₂ is H. The radical R₂ can
optionally contain: heteroatoms preferably Cl, O, N;
one or more functional groups preferably selected
from OH, COOH, epoxide, ester and ether; and
double bonds;

II) one or more cross-linking agents;

III) one or more optional ingredients.

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to fluorinated crosslinked polymers modified with hydrogenated monomers, the processes for obtaining them and the manufactured articles therefrom.

5 [0002] In particular the invention relates to curable compositions, comprising thermoprocessable copolymers of ethylene (E) with tetrafluoroethylene (TFE) and/or chlorotrifluoroethylene (CTFE) modified with acrylic monomers, subjected to ionizing radiations comprising X rays, gamma rays, electron beams and the like. The preferred sources of ionizing radiation include Cobalt-60, which emits high penetration gamma radiations and high energy electron beams.

10 [0003] It is well known in the art the crosslinking of the thermoprocessable ETFE and ECTFE copolymers by ionizing radiations (USP 3,738,923) also in the presence of crosslinking agents well known in the prior art such as triallyl-isocyanurate (TAIC), triallylcyanurate (TAC) and others, as reported in USP 3,763,222, USP 3,840,619, USP 4,039,631 and USP 4,121,001.

15 [0004] Unfortunately, to obtain a meaningful improvement of the mechanical properties higher doses of ionizing radiation are required. For example in the case of γ radiation, higher than 10 megarad (MRad), must be used. It is well known that high levels of irradiation can be obtained by using high intensity irradiation systems which are complex for safety reasons, or by irradiating with a low intensity irradiation system for longer times. Both cases are economically disadvantageous. Furthermore and most important, a high dose of radiation implies the strong risk to decompose the

starting polymer with possible formation of gaseous products.

It is desirable to operate at the lowest possible level of radiation intensity obtaining a crosslinked product having improved mechanical properties.

As ETFE and ECTFE thermoprocessable polymers are materials for the electric insulation

starting polymer with possible formation of gaseous products.

[0005] It would be therefore desirable to obtain a crosslinked product having improved mechanical properties.

20 It is known the use of the

starting polymer with possible formation of gaseous products.

uct was 1200 g. The obtained product is defined "Polymer A".

[0029] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 1 and at 120°C in Table 4, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of the polymer A.

1.2 - Preparation of the "Polymer A": Polymer A + TAIC 1% by weight

[0030] The polymer A was additivated with TAIC at 1% by weight and as optional components MARK-260® in an amount of 0.45% by weight and Aclyn-316® in an amount of 0.15% by weight, both mainly used as thermal stabilizers.

[0031] The obtained polymer, defined "Polymer A", is pelletized at a maximum temperature of 240°C, in a single screw Brabender extruder of Hastelloy C-276 having a 18 mm diameter and a length equivalent to 25 times the diameter.

[0032] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 1 and at 120°C in Table 4, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of the polymer A'.

1.3 - Ionizing radiation treatment

[0033] The polymer A' was compression molded at 240°C for 8 minutes at 40 bar obtaining specimens of 0.3 mm thickness. One specimen is treated with 1 MRad and another one with 5 MRad of γ radiation emitted by a Cobalt-60 source.

[0034] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 1 and at 120°C in Table 4, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method, of the specimens treated with ionizing radiation.

EXAMPLE 2 (comparative)

2.1 - Preparation of the "Polymer B" (E/CTFE 49/51 moles %)

[0035] In an enamelled autoclave equipped with baffle and stirrer working at 450 rpm of Hastelloy C, 5.3 l of demineralized water, 1.7 l of methyl alcohol, 52 ml of methylcyclopentane and 2 kg of chlorotrifluoroethylene were introduced. The autoclave was then heated to the reaction temperature of 15°C and ethylene was fed up to a pressure of 12.6 absolute bar. In the autoclave the radical initiator was then continuously fed (40 ml/h) during the polymerization under the form of a trichloroacetylperoxide (TCAP) solution in isooctane, maintained at -17°C, having a titre equal to 0.12 g TCAP/ml.

[0036] The pressure was maintained constant during the polymerization by continuously feeding ethylene to the reactor up to a consumption of 200 g; in total 200 ml of initiator solution were introduced.

[0037] The product discharged from the autoclave was dried at 120°C for about 16 hours. The amount of dry product was 1507 g. The obtained product is defined "Polymer B".

[0038] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 2 and at 120°C in Table 5, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of polymer B.

2.2 - Preparation of the "Polymer B": Polymer B + TAIC 1% by weight

[0039] The polymer B was additivated with TAIC at 1% by weight and as optional components MARK-260® in an amount of 0.45% by weight and Aclyn-316® in an amount of 0.15% by weight both used as thermal stabilizers.

[0040] The obtained polymer, defined "Polymer B", is pelletized at a maximum temperature of 270°C, in a single screw Brabender extruder of Hastelloy C-276 having a 18 mm diameter and a length equivalent to 25 times the diameter.

[0041] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 2 and at 120°C in Table 5, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of polymer B'.

2.3 - Ionizing radiation treatment

[0042] The polymer B' was compression molded at 240°C for 8 minutes at 40 bar obtaining specimens of 0.3 mm thickness. One specimen is treated with 1 MRad and another one with 5 MRad of γ radiation emitted by a Cobalt-60 source.

[0043] The mechanical properties at 23°C are reported in Table 2 and at 120°C in Table 5, obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method, of the specimens treated with ionizing radiation.

EXAMPLE 3 (comparative)**3.1 - Preparation of "Polymer C" (E/CTFE 45/55 moles %)**

5 [0044] Example 1.1 was repeated except that the n-butylacrylate monomer was not introduced. The obtained product is defined "Polymer C".

[0045] In Table 3 the mechanical properties at 23°C obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of polymer C, are reported.

10 **3.2 - Preparation of "Polymer C": Polymer C + TAIC 1% byweight**

[0046] The procedure of Example 1.2 was repeated by applying it to the polymer C. The obtained product is defined "Polymer C".

15 [0047] In Table 3 the mechanical properties at 23°C obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method by using compression molded specimens of polymer C', are reported.

3.3 - Ionizing radiation treatment

[0048] The procedure of Example 1.2 was repeated by applying it to the Polymer C'.

20 [0049] In Table 3 the mechanical properties at 23°C obtained according to the ASTM D1708 method of the specimen of polymer C' treated with ionizing radiation are reported. From the comparison of the Tables it is observed that the curable polymer compositions according to the present invention are capable to crosslink at levels of ionizing radiations at which the ECTFE copolymer does not crosslink. This is shown from the per cent increase of the stress at break at 23°C and at 120°C without jeopardizing the elongation at break.

Table 1

Mechanical properties at 23°C	Polymer A	Polymer A'	Polymer A' (treated with 1 MRad)	Polymer A' (treated with 5 Mead)
Elastic modulus (MPa)	1440	1441	1494	1486
Yield stress (MPa)	34.8	36.9	38.7	37.7
Elongation at break (%)	246	255	224	197
Stress at break (MPa)	43.0	45.0	48.3	48.8
% Variation of stress at break	-	4.7	12.3	13.5

Table 2

Mechanical properties at 23 °C	Polymer B	Polymer B' ted with 1 MRad)	Polymer B' (treawith 5 MRad)	Polymer B' (treated
Elastic Modulus (MPa)	1480	1488	1564	1567
Yield stress (MPa)	32.2	34.0	34.9	34.9
Elongation at break (%)	241	302	266	272
Stress at break (MPa)	55.4	57.7	54.6	55.6
% Variation of stress at break	-	4.2	- 1.4	0.4

Table 3

Mechanical properties at 23 °C	Polymer C	Polymer C' ted with 1 MRad)	Polymer C'(treawith 5 MRad)	Polymer C' (treated
Elastic Modulus (MPa)	1238	1307	1336	1311
Yield stress (MPa)	28.1	32.0	32.9	31.9
Elongation at break (%)	336	353	343	316
Stress at break (MPa)	41.8	42.7	43.2	42.1
% Variation of stress at break	-	2.1	3.3	0.7

Table 4

Mechanical properties at 120 °C	Polymer A	Polymer A'	Polymer A' (treated with 1 MRad)	Polymer A' (treated with 5 Mead)
Elastic Modulus (MPa)	7	6	5	6.5
Yield stress (MPa)	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.4
Elongation at break (%)	724	698	721	434
Stress at break (MPa)	1.7	1.7	6.5	5.8
% Variation of stress at break	-	0	282	240

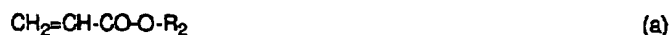
Table 5

Mechanical properties at 120 °C	Polymer B	Polymer B'	Polymer B' (treated with 1 MRad)	Polymer B' (treated with 5 MRad)
Elastic Modulus (MPa)	150	127	129	142
yield stress (MPa)	6.0	6.0	5.8	6.0
Elongation at break (%)	864	907	857	798
Stress at break (MPa)	19.0	17.2	17.3	18.6
% Variation of stress at break	-	-9.5	-8.9	-2.1

Claims

1. Crosslinked polymer compositions obtained by subjecting to ionizing radiations compositions comprising:

I) thermoprocessable copolymers of ethylene with tetrafluoroethylene (TFE) and/or chlorotrifluoroethylene (CTFE) modified with acrylic monomers of formula:



R_2 is a hydrogenated radical from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$, alkyl, linear and/or branched radical, or cycloalkyl, or R_2 is H. The radical R_2 can optionally contain: heteroatoms preferably C1, O, N; one or more functional groups preferably selected from OH, COOH, epoxide, ester and ether; and double bonds;

II) one or more cross-linking agents;

III) one or more optional ingredients.

2. Compositions according to claim 1 wherein the thermoprocessable copolymers of component I) are constituted from 10 to 70%, preferably from 35 to 55%, by moles of ethylene, from 30 to 90%, preferably from 45 to 65%, by moles of a fluorinated monomer selected from tetrafluoroethylene, chlorotrifluoroethylene, or mixtures thereof, from 0.1 to 30%, preferably from 1 to 15% by moles of the comonomer (a).
3. Compositions according to claim 2 wherein the fluorinated monomer of component I) is chlorotrifluoroethylene.
4. Compositions according to claims 1-2 wherein the acrylic monomers of formula (a) are n-butylacrylate.
5. Compositions according to claims 1-4 wherein the crosslinking agents are selected from: triallylisocyanurate (TAIC), triallylcyanurate (TAC), diallylisophthalate, diallylterephthalate, phenyl indene esters, triallylester of the aryl polycarboxylic acid, bis-olefins.
6. Compositions according to claim 5 wherein the crosslinking agent is triallylisocyanurate.
7. Compositions according to claims 1-6 wherein the crosslinking agent amount is in the range 0.1-10.0% by weight, preferably 0.3-5.0% by weight, more preferably 0.5- 2.0% by weight of the composition subjected to crosslinking.
8. Compositions according to claims 1-7 wherein the optional ingredients are selected from fillers, smoke retarders, lubricants, pigments, fire retardants, intumescent agents, plasticizers, metal oxides, thermal stabilizers.
9. Compositions according to claim 8 wherein the maximum total amount of the optional ingredients is 30.0% by weight of the composition subjected to crosslinking.
10. A crosslinking process by ionizing radiations for obtaining compositions according to claims 1-9 wherein the ionizing radiations are selected from: X rays, γ rays, electron beams, deuterons, α particles or their combinations.
11. A process according to claim 10 wherein the radiation amounts range from 0.1 to 10 Mrad, preferably from 0.2 to 5 Mrad, more preferably from 0.5 to 2 Mrad.
12. Manufactured articles obtainable from the compositions according to claims 1-9.
13. Manufactured articles according to claim 12 wherein the manufactured articles are cables.
14. Multilayer manufactured articles comprising hydrogenated polymers and crosslinkable polymer compositions according to claims 1-9, then subjecting to ionizing radiations.
15. Multilayer manufactured articles according to claim 14 wherein the hydrogenated polymers are:
 - thermoplastic hydrogenated polymers selected from:
cellulose polymers, polyamides, polyamide copolymers, polycarbonates, polyesters, such as for example polyethyleneterephthalate, polyester copolymers, polyolefins, olefine copolymers, polyimides, polystyrene, polyurethanes, polyvinylchloride (PVC), polysulphones, ethylene/vinylacetate copolymers, polyacrylbutadienestyrene (ABS);
 - hydrogenated elastomers selected from:
acrylic rubbers, nitrile rubbers (NBR), ethylene-propylene rubbers (EPM), ethylene-propylene-diene rubbers (EPDM), NYC rubbers (nitrile NBR rubbers mixed with PVC), epichlorohydrin rubbers (CO and ECO).
16. Multilayer manufactured articles according to claim 15 wherein the thermoplastic hydrogenated polymers are polyamides; the hydrogenated elastomers are the epichlorohydrin and nitrile rubbers (NBR).
17. Manufactured articles according to claims 14-16 wherein the manufactured articles are fuel lines and fuel hoses.

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18. Use of the compositions according to claims 14-17 for preparing fuel lines and fuel hoses.

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 10 5116

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EPO FORM 1503 03/92 (P4/C/D1)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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EP 00 10 5116

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